

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

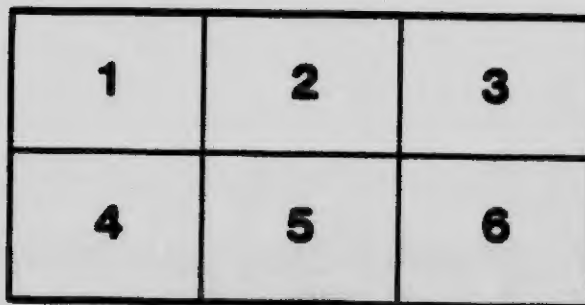
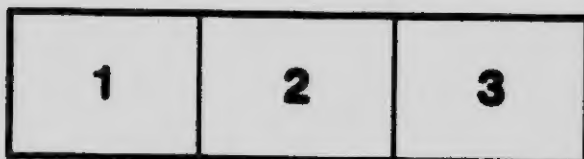
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contrast specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol $\rightarrow$ (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ∇ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

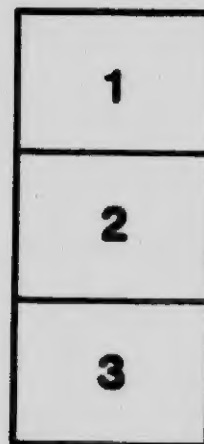
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole $\rightarrow$ signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ∇ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.



Causes of Belief in God

ABR

BL

50

L3213

BY
PAUL LAFARGUE

VANCOUVER, B. C.
THE WHITEHEAD ESTATE

The mode of production of the physical means of life
dominates as a rule the development of the social, political
and intellectual life.

KARL MARX

This series of pamphlets is published
for the Socialist Party of Canada, un-
der the terms of the bequest of the
late Comrade George Whitehead, of
Vancouver, B. C.

CAUSES OF BELIEF IN GOD.

I.

THE RELIGIOUS BOURGEOISIE AND THE IRRELIGIOUS PROLETARIAT.

Bourgeois free-thought under the auspices of two illustrious scientists, Berthelot and Haeckel, has set up its platform at Rome, opposite the Vatican to hurl its oratorical thunder-bolts against Catholicism, which with its hierarchal clergy and its alleged immutable dogma stands in the bourgeois mind for Religion.

Do the free thinkers, because they are putting Catholicism on trial, think they are emancipated from belief in God, the foundation of all religion? Do they think that the Bourgeoisie, the class to which they belong, can dispense with Christianity, of which Catholicism is a manifestation?

Christianity, though it has succeeded in adapting itself to other social forms, is first and foremost the religion of societies founded on individual property and the exploitation of wage labor, and that is why it has been, is, and shall be, whatever is said, and whatever is done, the religion of the Bourgeoisie. For more than ten centuries all its movements, whether for organizing itself, emancipating itself, or spreading into new territory, have been accompanied and complicated by religious crises; it has always put the material interests whose triumph it sought under the cover of Christianity, which it claimed that it wished to

reform and bring back to the pure doctrine of the Divine Master.

The bourgeois revolutionists of 1789, imagining that France could be dechristianized, persecuted the clergy with unequalled vigor; the more logical of them, thinking that nothing would be accomplished as long as the belief in God existed, abolished God by decree like a functionary of the old regime, and replaced him by the Goddess of Reason. But when the revolutionary fever had run its course, Robespierre reestablished by a decree the supreme being, the man of God being still out of fashion, and a few months later the curates emerged from their cells and opened their churches, where the faithful held love feasts, and Bonaparte to satisfy the bourgeois mob signed the Concordat: then appeared a Christianity of a romantic, sentimental, picturesque and macaronic character, adapted by Chateaubriand to the tastes of the triumphant Bourgeoisie.

The powerful intellects of free thought have affirmed and still affirm, in spite of evidence, that science would disencumber the human brain of the idea of God by making it useless for a comprehension of the mechanism of the universe.

Nevertheless the men of science with but few exceptions are still under the charm of that belief; if in his own field a scientist, to use Laplace's phrase, has no need of the hypothesis of God to explain the phenomena that he studies, he does not venture to declare that it is useless in accounting for those which are not summed up in the list of his researches; and all scientists recognize that God is more or less necessary for the proper working of the social goings and for the

CAUSES OF BELIEF IN GOD

morals of the masses.* Not only is the idea of God not completely banished from the brains of the scientists, but the grossest superstition flourishes, not in the backwoods and among the ignorant, but in the capitals of civilization and among the educated bourgeois, some enter into sessions with spirits to get news from beyond the tomb, others prostrate themselves before St. Anthony of Padua to find something lost, to guess the lucky number at the lottery, to pass an examination at the Polytechnic; they consult palmists, clairvoyants, card-readers, in order to learn the future, interpret dreams, etc. The scientific knowledge that they possess does not protect them against the most stupid credulity.

But while in all the groups of the Bourgeoisie the religious sentiment retains its vitality and

"La Revue Scientifique" for November 19, 1904, corroborates these assertions. H. Pieron, in his discussion of a work on "Scientific Materialism," recognizes that "God is the convenient residual cause of all that can not be explained, . . . that faith has always been framed to supplement science, . . . and that science has nothing to do with beliefs or faith, . . . but that religion is not absolutely incompatible with science, on condition, however that it be shut up in a thoroughly tight compartment." He protests also against "the succession of present day scientists who are searching in science for nothing but proofs of the existence of God or the truth of religion, as well as against the sophism of one who should search in science for proofs of the non-existence of God."

Up to the modern epoch, it was considered a denial of the existence of God if one did not recognize his incontestant action for the maintenance of order in the universe. Socrates reproached Anaxagoras for having wished to explain the motions of the heavenly bodies without the intervention of the gods, and Plato relates that the Athenians held as atheists the philosophers who admitted that the revolutions of the stars and the phenomena of nature were regulated by law (*Laws*, VII:81). In another passage, he demonstrates the existence of God by the creation, the order that reigns in it, and the consent of all nations, Greeks and barbarians (the same, X, 1.) God is "he who balances the world," said the Egyptian priests.

CAUSES OF BELIEF IN GOD

shows itself in a thousand fashions, the industrial proletariat is characterized by a religious indifference that is unreasoning, but unshakable.

Mr. Charles Booth, the well-known sociologist, at the close of his vast inquiry into the religious state of London, which his army of assistants "have visited district by district, street by street, and often house by house," states that "the mass of the people make no profession of faith and take no interest in religious observances. . . . The great section of the population which passes by the name of the working classes, lying socially between the lower middle class and the 'poor,' remains, as a whole, outside of all the religious bodies. . . . The churches have come to be regarded as the resorts of the well-to-do, and of those who are willing to accept the charity and patronage of the people better off than themselves. . . . The average working man of to-day thinks more of his rights or of his wrongs than of his duties and his failure to perform them. Humility and the consciousness of sin, and the attitude of worship, are perhaps not natural to him."* These undeniable proofs of the instinctive irreligion of the London workingmen, usually thought so religious, can be matched by the most superficial observation of the industrialized cities of France: If laborers are found there who assume religious sentiments, or who really have them (these latter are rare) it is because religion strikes them as a form of charitable relief; if others are fanatical free-thinkers, it is because

*Religious Influences: Series III. of the investigation undertaken by Charles Booth into the "Life and Labor of the People of London."

they have suffered from the meddling of the priest in their families or in their relations with their employer.

Indifference in religious matters, the most serious symptom of irreligion, to quote Lamennais, is inborn in the modern working class. While the political movements of the Bourgeoisie may have taken on a religious or anti-religious form, no inclination can be seen in the Proletariat of the great industries in Europe and America toward elaborating a new religion to replace Christianity, nor any desire to reform it. The economic and political organizations of the working class in both hemispheres are uninterested in any doctrinal discussion on religious dogmas and spiritual ideas; this however does not prevent their making war on priests of all cults, regarding them as the domestics of the capitalist class.

How comes it that the bourgeois, who receive a scientific education of greater or less extent, are still trammelled by religious ideas, from which the modern workers, without the education, have freed themselves?

II.

NATURAL ORIGINS OF THE IDEA OF GOD IN THE SAVAGE.

To declaim against Catholicism as the free-thinkers do, or to ignore God as the positivists do does not take account of the persistence of the belief in God in spite of the progress and the popularization of scientific knowledge, nor does it take account of the persistence of Christianity in spite of the railleries of Voltaire, the persecutions of the revolutionists, and the results of exegetic criticism. It is easy to declaim and ignore and it is hard to explain, for to do that one must begin by inquiring how and why belief in God and spiritualistic ideas slipped into the human brain, took root there, and developed; and answers to these questions are found only by going back to the ideology of the savages, where are clearly outlined the spiritualistic ideas which encumber the brains of civilized people.

The idea of the soul and of its survival is an invention of the savages, who allowed themselves an immaterial and immortal spirit to explain the phenomena of dreams.

The savage who has no doubt of the reality of his dreams imagines that if during his sleep he hunts, fights, or takes vengeance, and if on awakening he finds himself in the place where he lay down it is because another self, a double, as he says, impalpable, invisible and light as air has left his sleeping body to go far away to hunt or

fight, and if it comes about that he sees in his dreams his ancestors and his dead companions he concludes that he has been visited by their spirits, which survive the destruction of their corpses.

The savage, "that child of the human species," as Vico calls him has, like the child, puerile notions about nature. He thinks that he can give orders to the elements as to his limbs, that he can with words and magic rites command the rain to fall, the wind to blow, etc.; if for example he fears that the night may overtake him on his march he knots up in a certain fashion certain herbs to stop the sun, as the Joshua of the Bible did with a prayer. The spirits of the dead having this power over the elements to a higher degree than the living, he calls on them to produce the phenomenon when he fails in bringing it about. Since a brave warrior and a skilful sorcerer have more effect upon nature than simple mortals, their spirits when they are dead must consequently have a greater power over it than the doubles of ordinary men; the savage chooses them out of the crowd of spirits to honor them with offerings and sacrifices and to beg them to make it rain, when drought compromises his harvests, to give him victory when he takes the field, to cure him when he is sick. Primitive man starting out with a mistaken explanation of dreams elaborated the elements which later served for the creation of one sole God, who is when defined nothing more than a spirit, more powerful than the other spirits.

The idea of God is neither an innate idea, nor an *a priori* idea, but an *aposteriori* idea, just as all ideas are, since man can not think until he has

come in contact with the phenomena of the real world which he explains as he can. It is impossible to set forth in an article the logically deductive manner in which the idea of God proceeded from the idea of the soul, invented by the savages.

Grant Allen, bringing together and summing up the observations and researches of explorers, folk-lorists, and anthropologists and interpreting them and illuminating them by his ingenious and fertile criticism has followed out in its principal steps the process of formation of the idea of God in his remarkable work entitled, "The Evolution of the Idea of God; an Enquiry into the Origin of Religions," London, 1903. He also demonstrated with ample proofs that primitive Christianity with its Man-God, dead and raised again, its Virgin-Mother, its Holy-Spirit, its legends, its mysteries, its dogmas, its ethics, its miracles, and its ceremonies, merely assembled and organized into a religion, certain ideas and myths, which for centuries were current in the ancient world.

III.

ECONOMIC ORIGINS OF THE BELIEF IN GOD OF
THE BOURGEOIS.

It might reasonably have been hoped that the extraordinary development and popularization of scientific knowledge and the demonstration of the necessary linking of natural phenomena might have established the idea that the universe ruled by the law of necessity was removed from the caprices of any human or super-human will and that consequently God became useless since he was stripped of the multiple functions which the ignorance of the savages had laid upon him; nevertheless it can not but be recognized that the belief in God, who can at his will overthrow the necessary order of things, still persists in men of science, and that such a God is still in demand by the educated bourgeois, who asks him as the savages do for rain, victory, cures, etc.

Even if the scientists had succeeded in creating in bourgeois circles the conviction that the phenomena of the natural world obey a law of necessity in such sort that, determined by those which precede them, they determine those which follow them, it would still have to be proved that the phenomena of the social world are also subject to the law of necessity. But the economists, the philosophers, and moralists, the historians, the sociologists, and the politicians who study human societies, and who even assume to direct them, have not succeeded, and could not succeed in creating the conviction that social phenomena

depend upon the law of necessity like natural phenomena; and it is because they have not been able to establish this conviction that the belief in God is a necessity for bourgeois brains, even the most cultivated ones. If philosophical determinism reigns in the natural sciences it is only because the Bourgeoisie has permitted its scientists to study freely the play of natural forces, which it has every motive to understand, since it utilizes them in the production of its wealth; but by reason of the situation that it occupies in society it could not grant the same liberty to its economists, philosophers, moralists, historians, sociologists and politicians, and that is why they have not been able to introduce philosophical determinism into the sciences of the social world. The Catholic Church for a like reason formerly forbade the free study of nature, and its social dominance had to be overthrown in order to create the natural sciences.

The problem of the belief in God on the part of the Bourgeoisie can not be approached without an exact notion of the role played by this class in society. The social role of the modern bourgeoisie is not to produce wealth, but it is to have it produced by wage workers, to seize upon it and distribute it among its members after having left to its manual and intellectual producers just enough for their nourishment and reproduction.

The wealth taken away from the laborers forms the booty of the bourgeois class. The barbarian warriors after the taking and sacking of a city put the products of the pillage into a common fund, divided them into parts as equal as possible and distributed them by lot among those who had risked their lives to conquer them.

The organization of society permits the bourgeoisie to seize upon wealth without any one of its members being forced to risk his life. The taking possession of this colossal booty without incurring dangers is one of the greatest marks of progress in our civilization. The wealth despoiled from the producers is not divided into equal parts to be distributed by lot; it is distributed under form of rents, incomes, dividends, interests, and industrial and commercial profits, proportionately to the value of the real or personal property; that is to say, to the extent of the capital possessed by each bourgeois.

The possession of a property, a capital, and not that of physical, intellectual or moral qualities is the indispensable condition for receiving a part in the distribution of the wealth. A child in swaddling clothes, as well as an adult, may have a right to its share of the wealth. A dead man possesses it so long as a living man has not yet perfected his title to his property. The distribution is not made among men, but among properties. Man is a zero; property alone counts.

A false analogy has been drawn between the Darwinian struggle which the animals wage among themselves for the means of subsistence and reproduction and that which is let loose among the bourgeois for the distribution of wealth. The qualities of strength, courage, agility, patience, ingenuity, etc., which assure victory to the animal, constitute integral parts of his organism, while the property which gives the bourgeois part of the wealth which he has not produced is not incorporated in his individuality.

This property may increase or decrease and thus procure for him a larger or smaller share without its increase or diminution being occasioned by the exercise of his physical or intellectual qualities. At the very most it might be said that trickery, intrigue, charlatanism, in a word, the lowest mental qualities permit the bourgeois to take a part larger than that which the value of his capital authorizes him to take; in that case he pilfers from his bourgeois brothers. If then the struggle for life can in a number of cases be a cause for progress among animals, the struggle for wealth is a cause of degeneracy for the bourgeois.

The social mission of grasping the wealth produced by the wage-workers makes of the bourgeoisie a parasitic class; its members do not contribute to the creation of wealth, with the exception of a few whose number is constantly diminishing, and the labor which they furnish does not correspond to the portion of wealth which falls to them.

If Christianity, after having been in the first centuries the religion of the mendicant crowds whom the state and the wealthy supported by daily distributions of food, has become that of the bourgeoisie the parasitic class par-excellence, it is because parasitism is the essence of Christianity.

Jesus in his sermon on the mount explained its character in a masterly fashion; it is there that he formulates the "Our Father," the prayer which every believer must address to God to ask him for his "daily bread" instead of asking him for work; and in order that no Christian worthy of the name may be tempted to resort to work for

obtaining the necessities of life, the Christ adds, "Consider the birds of the air, they sow not neither do they reap, and your Heavenly Father feedeth them * * * take no thought therefore and do not say, tomorrow what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed. * * * Your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." The Heavenly Father of the bourgeoisie is the class of manual and intellectual wage workers; this is the God who provides for all its needs.

But the bourgeoisie can not recognize its parasitic character without at the same time signing its death warrant; so while it leaves the bridle on the neck of its men of science, that without being troubled with any dogma nor stopped by any consideration they may give themselves up to the freest and most profound study of the forces of nature, which it applies to the production of its wealth, it forbids to its economists, philosophers, moralists, historians, sociologists, and politicians the impartial study of the social world, and condemns them to the search of reasons that may serve as excuses for its phenomenal fortune.*

*The history of political economy is instructive. At a time when capitalist production, in the first stage of its evolution, had not yet transformed the mass of the bourgeois into parasites, the Physiocrats, Adam Smith, Ricardo, etc., could make an impartial study of economic phenomena, and search out the general laws of production. But since the machine-tool and steam require the co-operative efforts of wage-workers alone in the creation of wealth, the economists confine themselves to the collection of facts and statistical figures, valuable for the speculations of commerce and the Stock Exchange. Without endeavoring to group and classify them, so as to draw theoretical conclusions, since these could only be dangerous to the dominance of the possessing class. Instead of building up science they are fighting socialism; they have even wished to refute the Ricardian theory of value because Socialist criticism had taken possession of it.

Concerned only with the returns received or to be received, they are trying to find out, if by some lucky chance social wealth might not have other sources than the labor of the wage-worker, and they have discovered that the labor, the economy, the method, the honesty, the knowledge, the intelligence, and many other virtues of the bourgeois manufacturers, merchants, landed proprietors, financiers, shareholders, and income-drawers, contributed to its production in a manner far more efficacious than the labor of the manual and intellectual wage-workers, and therefore they have the right to take the lion's share and to leave the others only the share of the beast of burden.

The bourgeois hears them with a smile, because they sing his praises, he even repeats these impudent assertions, and calls them eternal truths; but, however slender his intelligence, he can not admit these things in his inmost soul, for he has only to look around him to perceive that those who work their life through, if they do not possess capital, are poorer than Job, and that those who possess nothing but knowledge, intelligence, economy, honesty, and who exercise these qualities, must limit their ambition to their daily pittance, and rarely hope for anything beyond. Then he says to himself: "If the economists, the philosophers, and the politicians with all their wit and literary training have not been able, in spite of their conscientious search, to find more valid reasons for explaining the wealth of the bourgeoisie, it is because there is something crooked in the business, some unknown cause

whose mysteries are beyond us." An *Unknowable* of the social order plants itself before the capitalist's eyes.

The capitalist, for the sake of social peace, is interested that the wage-workers should believe his riches to be the fruit of his innumerable virtues, but in reality he cares as little to know that they are the rewards of his good qualities as to know that truffles, which he eats as voraciously as the pig, are vegetables capable of cultivation; only one thing matters to him, namely, to possess them, and what troubles him is to think that he may lose them without any fault of his own. He can not help having this unpleasant perspective, since even in the narrow circle of his acquaintance, he has seen certain persons lose their possessions, while others became rich after having been in distress. The causes of these reverses and strokes of fortune are beyond him as well as beyond the people who experienced them. In a word, he observes a continual going and coming of wealth, the causes of which are for him within the realm of the *Unknowable*, and he is reduced to setting down these changes of fortune to chance, to luck.*

It is too much to hope that the bourgeois should ever arrive at a positive notion of the phenomena of the distribution of wealth, since in proportion as mechanical production develops,

*The capitalist mind has in all ages been tormented by the constant uncertainty of fortune, represented in Greek Mythology by a winged woman standing upon a wheel with her eyes bandaged. Theognis, the Megarian poet of the fifth century before the Christian era, whose poetry, according to Isocrates, was a text book in the Greek schools, said: "No man is the cause of his gains and of his losses, the Gods are the distributors of wealth. * * * We human beings cherish vain thoughts, but we know nothing.

property is depersonalized and takes on the collective and impersonal form of corporations with their stocks and bonds, the titles to which are finally dragged into the whirlpool of the stock exchange. There they pass from hand to hand without the buyers and sellers having seen the property which they represent, or even knowing exactly the geographical place where it is situated. They are exchanged, lost by some and won by others, in a manner which comes so near gambling that the distinction is difficult to draw. All modern economic development tends more and more to transform capitalist society

The Gods make all things come about according to their own will. * * Jupiter inclines the balance sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other, according to his will, that one may be rich, and then at another time may possess nothing. * * No man is rich or poor, noble or commoner, without the intervention of the Gods." The authors of Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Proverbs and Job make Jehovah play the same part. The Greek poet and the Jewish writers express the capitalists' thought.

Megara, like Corinth, its rival, was one of the first maritime cities of ancient Greece in which commerce and industry developed. A numerous class of artisans and capitalists took shape there and stirred up civil wars in its struggle for political power. About sixty years before the birth of Theognis, the democrats, after a victorious revolt, abolished the debts due to the aristocrats and required the restitution of the interest which had been extorted. Theognis, although a member of the aristocratic class and although he cherished a ferocious hatred against the democrats, whose black blood as he said he would gladly have drunk, because they had robbed and banished him, could not escape the influence of the bourgeois social environment. He is impregnated with its ideas and sentiments, and even with its language: thus on several occasions he draws metaphors from the assaying of gold, to which the merchants were constantly obliged to resort that they might know the value of the coins and ingots given them in exchange. It is precisely because the gnomic poetry of Theognis, like the books of the Old Testament, carried the maxims of bourgeois wisdom, that it was a school book in democratic Athens. It was, said Xenophon, a treatise on man such as a skilful horseman might write on the art of riding.

into one vast international gambling house where the bourgeois win and lose capital, thanks to unknown events which escape all foresight, all calculation, and which seem to them to depend on nothing but chance. The Unknowable is enthroned in bourgeois society as in a gambling house.

Gambling, which on the stock exchange is seen without disguise, has always been one of the conditions of commerce and industry; their risks are so numerous and so unforeseen, that often the enterprises which are conceived, calculated and carried out most skilfully fail, while others undertaken lightly, in a happy-go-lucky fashion, succeed. These successes and failures, due to unexpected causes generally unknown and apparently arising only from chance, predispose the bourgeois to the mental attitude of the gamester; the game of the stock exchange fortifies and vivifies this mental cast. The capitalist whose fortune is invested in stocks sold on the exchange, who is ignorant of the reason for the variations of their prices and dividends, is a professional gamester. Now the gamester, who can account for his gains or losses only as a good run or a bad run, is an eminently superstitious individual; the frequenters of gambling houses all have magical charms to compel good fortune; one mumbles a prayer to St. Anthony of Padua or no matter what spirit from Heaven, another plays only when a certain color has won, another holds a rabbit's foot in his left hand, etc.

The Unknowable of the social order envelops the bourgeois as the Unknowable of the natural order surrounded the savage; all or nearly all the

acts of civilized life tend to develop in him the superstitious and mystical habit of assigning everything to chance, like the professional gambler. Credit, for example, without which commerce and industry are impossible, is an act of faith in chance, in the unknown, performed by him who gives the credit, since he has no positive guarantee that the one who receives the credit will be able to meet his obligations at maturity, his solvency depending upon a thousand and one accidents that can not be foreseen nor understood.

Other economic phenomena instill every day into the bourgeois mind the belief in a mystical force without material support; detached from everything material. The banknote, to cite a single example, holds within itself a social force so far beyond its small material consequence that it prepares the bourgeois mind for the idea of a force, which should exist independently of matter. This miserable rag of paper, which no one would stoop to pick up, were it not for its magical power, gives its possessor all material things most to be desired in the civilized world; bread, meats, wine, house, lands, horses, women, health, consideration, honors, etc., the pleasures of the senses and the delights of the soul; God could do no more. Bourgeois life is woven out of mysticism.*

Commercial and industrial crises confront the

*Renan, whose cultivated mind was clouded with mysticism, had decided sympathy for the impersonal form of property. He relates in his "Memories of Childhood" (VI.), that instead of devoting his gains to the acquirement of real estate he preferred buying "socks and bonds, which are lighter, more fragile, more ethereal." The banknote is a value quite as ethereal as stocks and bonds.

terrified bourgeois,—uncontrollable, unchecked forces of a power so irresistible that they scatter disasters as terrible as the wrath of the Christian God. When they are unchained in the civilized world they ruin capitalists by thousands and destroy products and means of production by hundreds of millions. For a century the economists have recorded their periodical returns without being able to advance any plausible hypothesis of their origin. The impossibility of finding their causes on earth has suggested to certain English economists the idea of looking for them in the sun; its spots, they say, destroying by droughts the harvests of India, might diminish its capacity for purchasing European merchandise and might determine the crises. These grave sages carry us back scientifically to the judicial astrology of the middle ages, which subjected the events of human societies to the conjunction of the stars, and to the belief of savages in the action of shooting stars, comets, and eclipses of the moon upon their destinies.

The economic world swarms with fathomless mysteries for the bourgeois, mysteries which the economists resign themselves to leaving unexplored. The capitalist, who, thanks to his scientists has succeeded in domesticating natural forces, is so amazed by the incomprehensible effects of economic forces that he declares them uncontrollable, like God, and he thinks that the wisest course is to endure patiently the ills which they inflict and accept gratefully the favors which they grant. He says with Job: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Economic forces appear to

him in a fantasm as friendly and hostile spirits.*

The terrible and inexplicable phenomena of the social order which surround the capitalist and strike him without his knowing why or how, in his industry, his commerce, his fortune, his well-being, his life, are as disquieting for him as were for the savage the terrible and inexplicable phenomena of nature which excited and overheated his exuberant imagination. Anthropologists account for the primitive man's belief in witchcraft, in the soul, in spirits and in God, on the ground of his ignorance of the natural world: the same explanation holds for the civilized man; his spiritualist ideas and his belief in God should be attributed to his ignorance of the social world. The uncertain duration of his prosperity, and the unknowable causes of his fortunes and misfortunes, predispose the bourgeois to admit, like the savage, the existence of superior beings, which act on social phenomena as their fancies lead them, whether favorably or unfavorably, as described by Theognis and the writers of the Old Testament. To propitiate them he practices the grossest superstition, communicates with spirits from the other world, burns candles before sacred images and prays to the trinitarian God of the Christians or the one God of the philosophers.

The savage, in daily contact with nature, is especially impressed by the unknown things of the natural order, which on the contrary worry

*Crises impress the bourgeois so vividly that they talk of them as if they were corporeal beings. The celebrated American humorist Artemus Ward relates that hearing certain financiers and manufacturers in New York affirm so positively, "The crisis has come, it is here," he thought it must be in the room, and to see what kind of a head it had, he began looking for it under the tables and chairs.

the bourgeois but slightly; the only nature he knows about has been agreeably decorated, trimmed, graveled, raked off and generally domesticated. The numerous services that science has already rendered for his enrichment, and those he still expects from her, have engendered in his mind a blind faith in her power. He does not doubt but that some day she will solve the unknown problems of nature and even prolong indefinitely his own life, as promised by Metchnikoff, the microbe-maniac. But it is not so with the unknown things of the social world, the only ones that trouble him; these seem to him impossible of comprehension. It is the unknowable of the social world, not of the natural world, which insinuates into his unimaginative head the idea of God, an idea which he did not have the trouble of inventing, but found ready to be appropriated. The incomprehensible and insoluble social problems make God so necessary that he would have invented Him, had need been.

The bourgeois, vexed by the bewildering go and come of fortunes and misfortunes, and by the puzzling play of economic forces, is furthermore confused by the brutal contradiction of his own conduct and that of his fellows with the current notions of justice, morality, honesty; he repeats these sententiously, but refrains from regulating his acts by them, although he insists that they be observed strictly by the people who come into contact with him. For example, if the merchant hands his customer goods that are damaged or adulterated, he still wishes to be paid in sterling money; if a manufacturer cheats the laborer on the measurement of his work, he will not submit

to losing a minute of the day for which he pays him; if the bourgeois patriot (all bourgeois are patriots) seizes the fatherland of a weaker nation, his commercial dogma is still the integrity of his country, which according to Cecil Rhodes is a vast commercial establishment. Justice, morality, and other principles more or less eternal, are valuable for the bourgeois, but only if they serve his interests; they have a double face, an indulgent and smiling one turned toward himself, and a frowning and commanding face turned toward others.

The constant and general contradiction between people's acts and their notions of justice and morality, which might be thought of a nature to disturb the idea of a just God in the bourgeois mind, rather confirms it, and prepares the ground for that of the immortality of the soul, which had disappeared among nations that had reached the patriarchal period. This idea is preserved, strengthened and constantly revived in the bourgeois by his habit of expecting a reward for everything he does or does not do.* He employs

*Theognis, like Job and other Old Testament authors, is embarrassed by the difficulty of reconciling the injustice of men with the justice of God. "O son of Saturn," says the Greek poet, "how canst thou grant the same lot to the just and to the unjust? . . . O king of the immortals, is it just that he who has committed no shameful act, who has not transgressed the law, who has sworn no false oaths, but who has always remained honorable, should suffer? . . . The unjust man, full of himself, who fears the wrath neither of men nor of gods, who commits deeds of injustice, is gorged with riches, while the just man shall be despoiled and shall be consumed by hard poverty . . . What mortal is he that, seeing these things, shall fear the gods?"

The Psalmist says: "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches . . . When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. . . . I was envious of the foolish (those who fear not

laborers, manufactures goods, buys, sells, lends money, renders any service, whatever it be, only in the hope of being rewarded, of reaping a benefit. The constant expectation of profit results in his performing no act for the pleasure in it, but to pocket a recompense; if he is generous, charitable, honorable, or even if he limits himself to not being dishonest, the satisfaction of his conscience is not enough for him; a reward is essential if he is to be satisfied and not feel that he has been duped by his good and candid feelings; if he does not receive his reward on earth, which is generally the case, he counts on getting it in heaven. Not only does he expect a reward for his good acts, and his abstention from bad acts, but he hopes to receive compensation for his misfortunes, his failures, his vexations and even his annoyances. His ego is so aggressive that to satisfy it he annexes heaven to earth. The wrongs in civilization are so numerous and so crying, and those of which he is the victim assume in his eyes such boundless proportions, that his sense of eternal justice can not conceive but that some day they shall be redressed; and it is only in another world that this day can shine; only in heaven is he assured of receiving the reward for his misfortunes. Life after death becomes for him a certainty, for his good God, just and adorned with

the Eternal) when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Psalm LXXIII.)

Theognis and the Jews of the Old Testament, not believing in the existence of the soul after death, think that it is on earth that the wicked is punished, "for ~~him~~ is the wisdom of the gods," says the Greek moralist. "But that vexes the spirit of men, since it is not when the act is committed that the immortals wreak vengeance for the fault. One pays his debt in his own person, another condemns his children to misfortune." Men are punished for Adam's sin, according to Christianity.

all bourgeois virtues, can not but grant him rewards for what he has done and has not done, and amends for what he has suffered; in the business tribunal of heaven, the accounts not adjusted on earth will be audited.

The bourgeois does not give the name of injustice to his monopolizing of the wealth created by wage-workers; for him this robbery is justice itself, and he can not conceive how any imaginable God could have a different opinion on the subject. Nevertheless, he regards it as no violation of eternal justice to allow the laborers to cherish the desire to improve their conditions of life and of labor; but as he is keenly aware that these improvements would have to be made at his expense, he thinks it good policy to promise them a future life, where they shall feast like bourgeois. The promise of posthumous happiness is for him the most economical way to satisfy the laborers' demands. Life beyond the grave, at first a pleasure of hope for the satisfaction of his ego, becomes an instrument of exploitation.

Once it is settled that in heaven the accounts of earth are to be definitely settled, God necessarily becomes a judge having at his disposal an Eldorado for some and a prison for others, as is laid down by Christianity, following Plato.* The celestial judge renders his decrees according to

*Socrates, in the tenth and last book of the Republic, cites as worthy of belief the story of an Armenian who, left for dead ten days on the battlefield, came to life again, like Jesus, and related that he had seen in the other world "souls punished ten times for each unjust act committed on earth." They were tortured by "hideous men, who appeared all on fire. . . . They flayed the criminals, dragged them over thorns, etc." The Christians, who drew part of their moral ideas from the Platonic sophistry, had but to complete and improve Socrates' story to establish their hell, adorned with such frightful horrors.

the judicial code of civilization, enriched by a few moral laws which can not figure in it, owing to the impossibility of establishing the offense and finding the proof.

The modern bourgeois occupies himself mainly with the rewards and compensations beyond the tomb; he takes but a moderate interest in the punishment of the wicked, that is to say, the people who have injured him personally. The Christian hell disturbs him little; first, because he is convinced that he has done nothing and can do nothing to deserve it, and second, because his resentment against his fellows who have sinned against him is but short-lived. He is always disposed to renew his relations of business or pleasure with them if he sees any advantage in it; he even has a certain esteem for those who have duped him, since after all they have done to him only what he has done or would have liked to do to them. Every day in bourgeois society we see persons whose pilferings had made a scandal, and who might have been thought forever lost, return to the surface and achieve an honorable position; nothing but money was demanded of them as a condition for resuming business and making honorable profits.*

Hell could only have been invented by men and for men tortured by the hate and the passion of vengeance. The God of the first Christians is a pitiless executioner, who takes a savory pleasure

*Emile Pereire, the day after the scandalous crash of the Credit Mobilier, of which he was the founder and manager, meeting on the boulevards a friend who made as though he would not recognize him, went straight to him and said loudly: "You can salute me, I have several millions yet." The challenge, interpreting so well the bourgeois feeling, received due comment and appreciation. Pereire died a hundred times a millionaire, honored and regretted.

in feasting his eyes on the tortures inflicted for all eternity on the infidels, his enemies. "The Lord Jesus," says St. Paul, "shall ascend into heaven with the angels of his power, with burning flames of fire, working vengeance against those who know not God and who obey not the Gospel; they shall be punished with an everlasting punishment before the face of God and before the glory of his power."—II. Thess. i. 6-9. The Christian of those days expected with an equally fervent faith for the reward of his piety and the punishment of his enemies, who became the enemies of God. The bourgeois no longer cherishing these fierce hates (hate brings no profits), no longer needs a hell to assuage his vengeance, nor an executioner-God to chastise his associates who have clashed with him.

The belief of the bourgeoisie in God and in the immortality of the soul is one of the ideological phenomena of its social environment; it will never lose it till it is dispossessed of its wealth stolen from wage-workers, and transformed from a parasitic class into a productive class.

The bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, which struggled in France to grasp the social dictatorship, attacked furiously the Catholic clergy and Christianity, because they were props of the aristocracy; if in the ardor of battle some of its chiefs, Diderot, La Mettrie, Helvetius, d'Holbach, pushed their irreligion to the point of atheism, others, quite as representative of its spirit, if not more so, Voltaire, Rousseau, Turgot, never arrived at the negation of God. The materialist and sensualist philosophers, Cabanis, Maine de Biran, de Gerando, who survived the Revolu-

tion, publicly retracted their infidel doctrines. We must not waste our time in accusing these remarkable men of having betrayed the philosophical opinions which, at the opening of their career, had assured them fame and livelihood; the bourgeoisie alone is guilty. Victorious, it lost its irreligious combativeness, and like the dog in the Bible, it returned to its vomit. These philosophers underwent the influence of the social environment; being bourgeois, they evolved with their class.

This social environment, from the workings of which not even the most learned nor the most emancipated of the bourgeois can free themselves, is responsible for the deism of men of genius, like Cuvier, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Faraday, Darwin, and for the agnosticism and positivism of contemporary scientists, who, not daring to deny God, abstain from concerning themselves with him. But this very act is an implicit recognition of the existence of God, whom they need in order to understand the social world, which seems to them the plaything of chance, rather than ruled by the law of necessity, like the natural world.

M. Brunetiere, thinking to dart an epigram at the free-thought of his class, quotes the phrase of the German Jesuit Gruber, that "the Unknowable is an idea of God appropriate to Free Masonry." The Unknowable can not be any one's idea of God; but it is its generating cause, in savages and barbarians as well as in Christian bourgeois or Free-Masons. If the unknown elements of the natural environment made necessary for the savage and barbarian the idea of a God, creator and ruler of the world, the unknown elements of the

social environment make necessary for the bourgeois the idea of a God who shall distribute the wealth stolen from the manual and intellectual wage-workers, dispense blessings and curses, reward good deeds, avenge injuries and repair wrongs. The savage and the bourgeois are drawn unsuspectingly into the belief in God, just as they are carried along by the rotation of the earth.

IV.

EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD.

The idea of God, planted and germinated in the human brain by the unknown elements of the natural environment and the social environment, is not something invariable; it varies on the contrary according to time and place; it evolves in proportion as the mode of production develops, transforming the social environment.

God, for the Greeks, the Romans and other ancient peoples, had his dwelling in a given spot, and existed only to be useful to his adorers and hurtful to their enemies; each family had its private gods, the spirits of deified ancestors, and each city had its municipal or state god. The municipal god or goddess dwelt in the temple consecrated to him or her and was incorporated into the image which often was a block of wood or a stone; he or she was interested in the fate of the inhabitants of the city of these alone. The ancestral gods concerned themselves only with family affairs. The Jehovah of the Bible was a god of this kind; he lodged in a wooden box, called Ark of the Covenant, which was carried along when the tribes changed their location; they put it at the head of the army, that Jehovah might fight for his people; if he chastised them cruelly for their infractions of his law, he also rendered them many services, as the Old Testament reports. When the municipal god was not in the best of circumstances, they associated another divinity with him; the Romans, during the second

Punic war, brought over from Pessinonte the statue of Cybele, that the goddess from Asia Minor might aid them in their defense against Hannibal. The Christians had no other idea of divinity when they demolished the temples and broke the statues of the gods in order to oust them and keep them from protecting the pagans.

The savages thought that the soul was the replica of the body, so their deified spirits, though incorporated into stones, blocks of wood or beasts, preserved the human form. Similarly for St. Paul and the apostles, God was anthropomorphic, they made of him a Man-God, like to themselves both in body and in mind; while the modern capitalist conceives him as without head or arms, and present in all the nooks and corners of the earth, instead of being quartered in one certain locality.

The Greeks and Romans, like the Jews and the first Christians had no thought of their god being the only god of creation; the Jews believed in Moloch, Baal and other gods of the nations with which they warred as firmly as in Jehovah, and the Christians of the first centuries and of the middle ages, while they called Jupiter and Allah false gods, still took them for gods, who could work wonders quite as well as Jesus and his Eternal Father.* This belief in a multiplicity of gods made it possible for each city to have a god attached to its service, shut up in a temple and incorporated into a statue or some such object;

*Tertullian in his Apologetics and St. Augustin in his "City of God" relate as undeniable facts that Esculapius had raised several persons, mentioned by name, from the dead, that a Vestal had carried water from the Tiber in a sieve, that another Vestal had towed a ship with her girdle, etc

Jehovah was in a stone. The modern capitalist who thinks that his God is present in all places of the earth can not but arrive at the notion of one sole God; and the ubiquity which he attributes to his God prevents his representing him with face and buttocks, arms and legs, like Homer's Zeus and St. Paul's Jesus.

The municipal divinities, which belonged to the warlike cities of antiquity, always at strife with neighboring peoples, could not answer to the religious needs which mercantile production created in the bourgeois democracies of the commercial and industrial cities, obliged on the contrary to maintain pacific relations with surrounding nations. The necessities of commerce and industry forced the new-born Bourgeoisie to demunicipalize the city divinities and create cosmopolitan gods. Six or seven centuries before the Christian era we observe in the maritime cities of Ionia, Magna Grecia and Greece attempts to organize religions whose gods should not be exclusively monopolized by one city, but should be recognized and worshipped by different nations, even hostile ones. These new divinities, Isis, Demeter, Dionysos, Mithra, Jesus, etc., several of whom belonged to the matriarchal epoch, still took on the human form, though the need was beginning to be felt of a Supreme Being which should not be anthropomorphic; but it is not until the capitalist epoch that the idea of an amorphous god has imposed itself, as a consequence of the impersonal form taken on by the property of corporations.

Impersonal property, which introduced a mode of possession absolutely new and diametrically

opposed to that which had previously existed, was necessarily destined to modify the habits and customs of the bourgeois and consequently transform his mentality. Until its appearance, the possibilities of ownership were limited to a vineyard in the Bordelais, a weaving establishment at Rouen, a forge at Marseilles or a grocery in Paris. Each of these properties, distinct in the character of the industry and in its geographical situation, was possessed by one single individual, or by two or three at the most; it was a rare thing for one individual to possess several of them. It is otherwise with impersonal property: a railroad, a mine, a bank, etc., are possessed by hundreds and thousands of capitalists, while one and the same capitalist may have side by side in his portfolio bonds of France, Prussia, Turkey and Japan, with stocks of gold mines in the Transvaal, electric railways in China, a line of trans-Atlantic steamers, a coffee plantation in Brazil, a coal mine in France, etc. No such ties of affection can link the capitalist to the impersonal property he possesses as bind the bourgeois to the property that he administers, or that is operated under his control; his interest in it is proportioned only to the price paid for the stock and the rate of dividends it bears. It is a matter of absolute indifference to him whether the dividend be declared by a scavenger enterprise, a sugar refinery or a cotton-spinning mill, and whether the production be carried on at Paris or at Peking. Once the dividend becomes all-important, the distinguishing characteristics of the properties producing it disappear, and these properties in different industries, differently situated, are for the capi-

talist one sole dividend-bearing property, whose certificates, circulating on the stock exchange, continue to keep various names of trade and of countries.

Impersonal property, embracing all trades and extending all over the globe, unrolls its tentacles armed with suckers greedy for dividends, in a Christian nation just as it does in realms of Mohammedanism, Buddhism or fetichism. The accumulation of wealth is the absorbing and mastering passion of the capitalist, and so this identification of properties of different sorts and countries in one sole and cosmopolitan property was bound to reflect itself in his intelligence and to influence his conception of God.* Impersonal property without any doubt leads him to amalgamate the gods of the earth into one sole and cosmopolitan God, who according to the various countries bears the name of Jesus, Allah or Buddha, and is worshipped according to different rites.

It is a matter of historical fact that the idea of one sole and universal God, which Anaxagoras was one of the first to conceive, and which through the centuries lived only in the brains of a few thinkers, did not become a current idea until capitalist civilization appeared. But as by the side of this impersonal, sole and cosmopolitan property there still exist countless personal and local properties, so certain local and anthropomorphic gods touch elbows in the capitalist's brain with the one and cosmopolitan God. The division into nations, which are commercial and industrial rivals, compels the Bourgeoisie to par-

*"Wealth engenders not satiety," says Theognis, "the man who has the most strives ever to double it."

cel out its one God into as many gods as there are nations; thus every nation of Christendom thinks that the Christian God, who is all the while the God of all Christians, is its national god, like Jehovah of the Jews and Fallas-Athene of the Athenians. When two Christian nations declare war, each prays its national and Christian God to fight on its side, and if it is victorious, it sings *Te Deums* to thank him for having beaten the rival nation and *its* national and Christian God. The pagans made different gods fight among themselves, the Christians make their one God fight with himself. The one and cosmopolitan God could not completely dethrone the national gods in the bourgeois brain unless all the bourgeois nations were centralized into one single nation.

Impersonal property possesses other qualities, which it has transmitted to its one and cosmopolitan God. The proprietor of a wheat field, a carpenter's shop or a haberdashery can see, touch, measure, and appraise his property, the clear and precise form of which strikes his senses, but the owner of government bonds and of shares in a railroad, a coal mine, an insurance company or a bank can not see, touch, measure, appraise the parcel of property represented by his bonds and stocks, in whatever forest or government building, in whatever wagon, ton of coal, insurance policy or bank safe he might suppose it to be found. His fragment of property is lost, buried in a vast whole that he can not even picture to himself; for if he has seen locomotives and stations, as well as subterranean galleries, he has never seen a railroad nor a mine in its entirety;

and a national debt, a bank and an insurance company are not capable of being represented by any image whatever. The impersonal property of which he is one of the co-proprietors can not assume in his imagination other than a vague, uncertain, indeterminate form; it is for him rather a rational being, which reveals its existence by dividends, than a tangible reality. Nevertheless this impersonal property, though indefinite as a metaphysical conception, provides for all his needs, like the Heavenly Father of the Christians, without requiring from him any more labor of body and brain than to take in his dividends: he receives them in blessed laziness of body and soul as a Grace of Capital, of which the Grace of God, "the truest of Christian doctrines," as Renan says, is the religious reflection. He troubles his brain as little to study the nature of the impersonal property which gives him interest and dividends as he does to know whether his one and cosmopolitan God is man, woman or beast, intelligent or idiotic, and whether he possesses the qualities of strength, ferocity, justice, kindness, etc., with which the anthropomorphic gods had been endowed. He wastes no time on prayers, because he is sure that no supplication will modify the rate of interest or dividend on the impersonal property of which his one and cosmopolitan God is the intellectual reflection.

At the very time when impersonal property was transforming the anthropomorphic God of the Christians into an amorphous God and a rational being,—into a metaphysical conception, it was taking away from the religious feeling of the Bourgeoisie the virulence which had produced the

fanatical fever of martyrs, crusaders and inquisitors; it was transforming religion into a matter of personal taste, like cookery, which each suits to his fancy, with butter or with oil, with garlic or without. But if the capitalist Bourgeoisie needs a religion, and finds liberal Christianity to its taste, it can not accept without serious amendments the Catholic Church, whose inquisitorial despotism descends to the details of private life, and whose organization of bishops, curates, monks and Jesuits, disciplined and obedient to wink and nod, is a menace to its public order. The Catholic Church was endurable for the feudal society, all of whose members from serf to king, were graded in a hierarchy and bound to each other by reciprocal rights and duties; but it can not be tolerated by the bourgeois democracy, whose members, equal before the law, but divided by their interests, wage perpetual industrial and commercial war among themselves, and always claim the right to criticize the constituted authorities, and hold them responsible for their economic mischances.

The capitalist, who does not want any obstacle to his getting rich, found it equally impossible to tolerate the guild organization of master-workmen, which supervise the manner of producing and the quality of the product. He crushed it. Freed from all control, he now has but his own interest to consult in making his fortune, each according to the means at his disposal: on his elastic conscience alone depends the quality of the goods that he makes and sells; it is for the customer to see that he is not deceived with regard to the quality, weight and price of what he buys.

Every one for himself, and God, in other words money, for all. The freedom of industry and commerce could not but reflect itself in his way of conceiving religion, which each one understands as he likes. Each makes his own arrangements with God, as with his conscience in a business matter; each according to his interests and his light interprets the teachings of the church and the words of the Bible, which is put into the hands of the Protestants, as the Code is put into the hands of all the capitalists.

The capitalist can be neither martyr nor inquisitor, because he has lost the furor of proselytism which inflamed the first Christians. They had a vital interest in increasing the number of believers, in order to swell the army of malcontents, giving battle to pagan society. Yet he has a sort of religious proselytism, without breath and without conviction, which is conditioned by his exploitation of woman and of the wage-worker.

Woman must be pliable to his wishes. He wishes her faithful and unfaithful according to his desires. If she is the wife of a brother capitalist, and if he is courting her, he demands her infidelity as a duty toward his Ego, and he unfurls his rhetoric to relieve her of her religious scruples; if she is his lawful wife, she becomes his property, and must be inviolate; he requires from her a fidelity equal to every test, and employs religion to force conjugal duty toward him into her head.

The wage-worker ought to be resigned to his lot. The social function of exploiter of labor requires the capitalist to propagate the Christian religion, preaching humility and submission to

God, who chooses the masters and sets off the servants, and to complete the teachings of Christianity by the eternal principles of democracy. It is quite to his interest that the wage-workers exhaust their brain power in controversies on the truths of religion and in discussions on Justice, Liberty, Ethics, Patriotism and other such booby-traps, in order that they may not have a minute left to reflect on their wretched condition and the means for improving it. The famous radical and free-trader, John Bright, appreciated this stultifying method so thoroughly, that he devoted his Sundays to reading and commenting on the Bible for his laborers. But the profession of Biblical brain-destroyer, which English capitalists of both sexes may undertake to kill time or as a whim, is of necessity irregular, like any amateur work. The capitalist class needs to have at its disposal professionals in brain destroying to fulfil this task. He finds them in the clergy of all cults. But every medal has its reverse side. The reading of the Bible by wage-workers presents dangers that one day some pious Rockefeller will recognize; and to meet this situation he will organize a company for the publication of popular Bibles expurgated of the complaints against the iniquities of the rich and of the cries of envious wrath against their scandalous good fortune. The Catholic Church, foreseeing these dangers, had provided against them, by forbidding the faithful to read the Bible, and by burning Wyclif, the first to translate it into a vulgar tongue. The Catholic clergy, with its neuvaines, its pilgrimages, and its other mummeries, is of all clergies that which practices most wisely the art of brain-

destruction; it is also the best equipped for furnishing ignorant brothers and sisters to teach in primary schools, and nuns to stand guard over women in factories. The great industrial capitalists, on account of its manifold services, sustain it politically and financially, in spite of their antipathy for its hierarchy, its rapacity, and its intrusion into family affairs.

V.

CAUSES OF THE IRRELIGION OF THE PROLETARIAT

The numerous attempts made in Europe and America to christianize the industrial proletariat have completely miscarried; they have not succeeded in moving it from its religious indifference, which becomes general in proportion as machine production enlists new recruits from the peasants, artisans and petty tradesmen into the army of wage-workers.

Machine production, which makes the capitalist religious, tends on the contrary to make the proletariat irreligious.

If it is logical for the capitalist to believe in a Providence attentive to his needs, and in a God who elects him among thousand of thousands, to load with riches his laziness and social inutility, it is still more logical for the proletarian to ignore the existence of a divine Providence, since he knows that no Heavenly Father would give him daily bread if he prayed from morning to evening, and that the wage which produces for him the bare necessities of life is earned by his own labor: and he knows only too well that if he did not work he would starve, in spite of all the Good Gods of heaven and all the philanthropists of earth. The wage-worker is his own providence. His conditions of life make any other providence inconceivable for him; he has not in his life, as the capitalist in his, those strokes of fortune which might by magic lift him out of his sad

situation. Wage-worker he is born, wage-worker he lives, wage-worker he dies. His ambition can not go beyond a raise in wages and a job that shall last all the days of the year and all the years of his life. The unforeseen hazards and chances of fortune which pre-dispose the capitalist to superstitious ideas do not exist for the proletarian, and the idea of God can not appear in the human brain unless its coming is prepared for by certain superstitious ideas, no matter what their source.

If the wage-worker were to let himself be drawn into a belief in that God, whom he hears talked of without paying attention, he would begin by questioning his justice, which allotted to him nothing but work and poverty; he would make the God an object of horror and of hate, and would picture him under the form and aspect of a capitalist exploiter, like the black slaves of the colonies, who said that God was white, like their masters.

Of course the wage-worker has no more idea of the course of economic phenomena than the capitalist and his economists, nor does he understand why, as regularly as night succeeds day, the periods of industrial prosperity and work at high pressure are followed by crises and lockouts. This failure to understand, which predisposes the mind of the capitalist to belief in God, has not the same effect on that of the wage-worker, because they occupy different positions in modern production. The possession of the means of production gives the capitalist the direction absolute and arbitrary of the production and distribution of products, and obliges him, consequently, to concern himself

with the causes which govern them: the wage-worker, on the contrary, has no right to trouble himself with them. He has no part in the direction of the productive process, nor in the choice and the procuring of the raw materials, nor in the manner of producing, nor in the sale of the product; he has but to furnish labor like a beast of burden. The passive obedience of the Jesuits, which arouses the wordy indignation of the free-thinkers, is the law in the army and the workshop. The capitalist plants the wage-worker in front of the moving machine, loaded with raw materials, and orders him to work; he becomes a cog of the machine. He has in production but one aim, the wage, the sole interest which capitalism has been forced to leave him; when he has drawn this, he has nothing more to claim. The wage being the sole interest that it has permitted him to keep in production, he therefore has to concern himself simply with having work so as to receive wages; and as the employer or his representatives are the givers of work, it is they, men of flesh and blood like himself, that he blames, if he has or has not work, and not economic phenomena, which he may be entirely ignorant of; it is against these men that he is irritated on account of the reductions of wage and slackness of work, and not against the general perturbations of production. He holds them responsible for all that comes to him, good or evil. The wage-worker personalizes the accidents of production which affect him, while the possession of the means of production is depersonalized in proportion as they take the form of machinery.

The life led by the laborer in the great in-

dustries has removed him even more than the capitalist from the influences of the environment of nature which in the peasant keep up the belief in ghosts, in sorceries, in witchcraft and other superstitious ideas. He sees the sun only through the factory windows; he knows nature only from the country surrounding the city where he works, and that he sees only on rare occasions; he could not distinguish a field of wheat from a field of oats nor a potato plant from hemp; he knows the products of the earth only in the form under which he consumes them. He is completely ignorant of the work of the fields and the causes affecting the yield of the harvests; drought, excessive rains, hail, cyclones, etc., never make him think of their action on nature and her harvests. His urban life shelters him from the anxieties and the troublesome cares which assail the mind of the farmer. Nature has no hold upon his imagination.

The labor of the mechanical factory puts the wage-worker in touch with terrible natural forces unknown to the peasant, but instead of being mastered by them, he controls them. The gigantic mechanism of iron and steel which fills the factory which makes him move like an automaton, which sometimes clutches him, mutilates him, bruises him, does not engender in him a superstitious terror as the thunder does in the peasant, but leaves him unmoved, for he knows that the limbs of the mechanical monster were fashioned and mounted by his comrades, and that he has but to push a lever to set it in motion or stop it. The machine, in spite of its

miraculous power and productiveness, has no mystery for him. The laborer in the electric works, who has but to turn a crank on a dial to send miles of motive power to tramways or light to the lamps of a city, has but to say, like the God of Genesis, "Let there be light," and there is light. Never sorcery more fantastic was imagined, yet for him this sorcery is a simple and natural thing. He would be greatly surprised if one were to come and tell him that a certain God might if he chose stop the machines and extinguish the lights when the electricity had been turned on; he would reply that this anarchistic God would be simply a misplaced gearing or a broken wire, and that it would be easy for him to seek and to find this disturbing God. The practice of the modern workshop teaches the wage-worker scientific determinism, without his needing to pass through the theoretical study of the sciences.

Since the capitalist and the proletarian no longer live in the fields, natural phenomena can no longer produce in them the superstitious ideas, which were utilized by the savage in elaborating his idea of God; but if the former, since he belongs to the ruling and parasitic class, undergoes the action of the social phenomena which generate superstitious ideas, the other, since he belongs to the exploited and productive class, is removed from their superstition-breeding action. The capitalist class can never be de-christianized and delivered from belief in God until it shall be expropriated from its class dictatorship and from the wealth that it plunders daily from the wage-working laborers.

The free and impartial study of nature has engendered and firmly established in certain scientific circles the conviction that all phenomena are subject to the law of necessity, and that their determining causes must be sought within nature and not without. This study has, moreover, made possible the subjection of natural forces to the use of man.

But the industrial use of natural forces has transformed the means of production into economic organisms so gigantic that they escape the control of the capitalists who monopolize them, as is proved by the periodic crises of industry and commerce. These organisms of production, though of human creation, disturb the social environment, when crises break out, as blindly as the natural forces trouble nature when once unchained. The modern means of production can no longer be controlled except by society, and for that control to be established, they must first become social property; then only will they cease to engender social inequalities, to give wealth to the parasites and inflict miseries on the wage-working producers, and create worldwide perturbations which the capitalist and his economists can attribute only to chance and to unknown causes. When they shall be possessed and controlled by society, there will no longer be an Unknowable in the social order; then and only then, will belief in God be definitely eliminated from the human mind.

The indifference in religious matters of our modern laborers, the determining causes of which I have been tracing, is a new phenomenon, now produced for the first time in history: the

popular masses have, till now, always elaborated the spiritual ideas, which the philosophers have merely had to refine and to obscure, as well as the legends and the religious ideas, which the priests and the ruling classes have merely organized into official religions and instruments of intellectual oppression.

